/29 cont./

133 reaches Yen-meng and Ch'e-t'ou where the Yu-lo Ch'i, the Huang-an Ch'i, and the T'un-szu Ch'i tributaries joint it from the west. Finally it flows past Shih-yang-shao and enters Ma-yang-chiai, and reaches Kao-ts'un, where it empties into the Ch'en Chiang River.

[131] Topography. (Illus. 2). Topographically, the Miao area may be divided into two natural regions. The northwestern section can be called the La-erh plateau region; the southeastern section is the region where the rivers flow down. Although the plateau rises about 700 kung ch'ih above sea level, on it there are a great many small basins, with many springs and ponds [192] good for irrigation. The Miao call such small basins p'ing /a plain/, t'ang /a pond/, or ch'ung. The best known among these is the Pao-mu-ying-p'ing, about 70 li north /30/ of Feng-huang-ch'eng /city/. Surrounded by mountains, this level area measures five to six li in length and three to four li in width, [312] and has seven or eight spring-fed ponds, supplying ample drinking water. It is the largest basin on the plateau. Ya-pao-chai (Illus. 7),[1] situated in the Ya-pao-shan mountains, about 93 li [433] north of Feng-huang-ch'eng, is very high and cold. It has [241] several fish ponds and produces rough rice and yams. In 1795, [648] when the Miao revolted, the headman, Wu Lung-teng, whose family had lived there for generations, was entrenched there. The above two places are the largest among the basins on the plateau. There are countless small basins /p'ing and ch'ung/. [312] There are numerous wells and springs in the mountains, wells being found even on the peaks. The "Yao K'ao" section of the Miao Fang-pei Lan states: "Fifty li southwest outside the city is Ma-an Shan /"Horse Saddle Mountain"/, which is about eight or nine li in height, is very steep, and resembles a horse saddle in shape. On top of the mountain there is a well that never [312] goes dry. On the mountain there are pockets where there are irrigated rice fields. It is a strategic point for the uncivilized Miao to defend." The La-erh plateau is dotted with Miao [361] villages and settlements because of its level places /p'ing/ and wells and springs, and there the Miao people thrive.

1 [see cat. 114, p55 - ANALYST]

/61 cont./

731 was due not to human nature but to environment. A policy
648 geared to the solution of the basic problem should try to improve the livelihood of the Miao and to remove the pressure of population through migration. Otherwise, Miao disturbances cannot be eliminated and will remain a source of trouble.

241 Restricted by the size of their land area the Miao seek to
433 utilize every inch of land. Comparatively level land is made into fields to be inundated. The slopes from the foot to the waist of the mountain are terraced. The higher slopes are made into yü fields. On mountain land unsuitable for grains are
[245] planted tung trees (Illus. 32), tea plants (Illus. 33), and pine
[258] trees (Illus. 34). Oil can be extracted from tung and tea seeds,
[313] and the pine tree yields lumber (Illus. 35), thus providing relatively good profits forming the major part of their income from auxiliary products. Hence, the Miao are experienced in planting the tung tree and tea plants.

245 The planting of the tung trees requires first the selection of a site where not only is the earth suited for the tung tree but where the location is convenient for picking and transportation. If the slope is precipitous, transportation is difficult, and moreover the seeds may roll down into the ravine while being picked. After a place has been picked, the "slash and burn" method of cultivation is used, first all the trees and undergrowth being cut down. After some ten days to a month of sunshine and wind blasts, the felled trees and grass gradually become dried up. Then they set fire to it, and the earth becomes scorched. The soil is dug after it has been well-soaked by rain. Digging generally is done in the spring, in the second and third month, and in the winter in the tenth and eleventh months. The earth has to be dug deep to loosen the soil so that the tung trees can grow tall and big and produce solid seeds, and live a long time. The selection of the tree is guided by the size of the tree and the abundance of the seeds, those of ball shape being preferred. The planting season is from the tenth month to the second month of the next year. Either seedlings are nursed for one

/189 cont./

787 [756] The Meau ascribe extraordinary importance to various omens, whose number is almost legion. There are many omens that only the shaman knows how to interpret, while a great number is known to every Meau and he can interpret them himself and act accordingly. For example a field is abandoned if bad [241] omens appear, an /190/ accident occurs, or the crop fails, since one concludes from this that evil spirits are in it.

243 787 When a rice field is laid out, a person must be specially careful, and he does not by any means limit himself to the sacrificial festivals for the protective spirits described above, since the welfare of a Meau community depends upon the yield from the fields. The Meau live on the field products and the [433] booty from hunting; their dwellings and villages stand in the midst of forest areas. Hence it is not surprising that the behavior and the presence or the absence of various animals are believed [825] to be omens. In the search for a suitable location no muntjac may be seen or heard. If this obstacle is met successfully, it may still happen that when the first tree is felled, a turtle or a snake appears. In that case only swift flight can save one, for it means [776] that the dwelling of a spirit has been destroyed.

342 787 825 The omens which have to be heeded when a house is built are equally numerous. One may neither see a snake nor hear the "shriek" of a muntjac. Even the cry of a black squirrel is a bad omen. If none of these bad omens were noticed and if no bird dropped his excrement on the site chosen, the house and its occupants will be blessed.

224 787 825 In view of all this, it is self-evident that the Meau hunters, too, have absolute faith in the omens with which they are familiar. If one sets out to hunt and sees a snake or a muntjac, the undertaking is immediately called off. If one nevertheless wanted to proceed to hunt, he must expect to be killed by a wounded buffalo or elephant.

The muntjac plays an important and always unfavorable role. Merely its "shriek" is enough; the hunter who hears it believes that he cannot expect to bag any game.

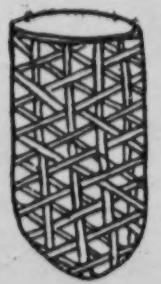
AKha A04
Miao AE5

/353 cont./

A 226 The Akha, too, do not know these fishing methods and are not even familiar with fish poison. Moreover, the Akha are not nearly as passionate about it, but they are likewise good fishermen. Like the Meau, they fish with their hands, with lines, simple hooks and small hand-nets which resemble A [227] the fish nets of the Meau. The net, however, is attached to a perforated wooden hoop (chapter, "Handicrafts," Fig. 406); the meshes of the net are like those of the carrying bags.

d) Agriculture

M 243 [433] [171] Whereas gathering, hunting, and fishing play almost only the role of expanding the food base, agriculture is the actual economic basis of all the mountain peoples of Farther India.



M 178 243 407 Fig. 266 Weir-basket of the Meau, about 1/20 nat. size.

The Meau in Thailand, strangely enough, do not arrange their rice fields in terraces, though their neighbors, the Chinese, are famous masters at it, and this agricultural method makes possible the cultivation of wet rice. Thus, on the steep slopes which, without terraces, also do not permit the use of the plow, only hoe culture remains. There are still living witnesses to the fact that in former times, and to be sure not too long ago, the situation was different in the more northerly habitation sites of the Meau M [227] [285] now settled in Thailand. For instance, I found in northern Thailand a few old Meau who were still familiar with the use of the plow. In answer to my question as to why the use of this implement had been given up, an old chief replied: "This land, and even more the country that we had to pass through to reach our present dwelling sites, is mountainous, stony, and does not permit the use of the plow. In our old homeland, too, there were such regions in which one could not use a plow. In